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EXAMINER

DUNWOODY, AARON M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3679

DATE MAILED: 02/11/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

# Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/014,117

Applicant(s)

LE, TUAN

Examiner

Aaron M Dunwoody

Art Unit

3679

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

## Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

## Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 October 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

## Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

## Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

## Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- \* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

## Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

## **DETAILED ACTION**

### ***Information Disclosure Statement***

No Information Disclosure Statement submitted.

### ***Drawings***

The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a). The drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Therefore, the sectors being pried by and separated with a sharp blade of a common tool, the mating surfaces comprising a portion defined by a set of lines parallel to the axis of the annular surfaces, and the second conduit having threads must be shown or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s). No new matter should be entered.

A proposed drawing correction or corrected drawings are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

The drawings are objected to because a bracket should embrace the illustrations of figures 1 and 2, and leader lines are missing from reference numbers 25a and 38b. A proposed drawing correction or corrected drawings are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

The drawings are objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) because they do not include the following reference sign(s) mentioned in the description: 26b. A proposed drawing correction or corrected drawings are required in

Art Unit: 3679

reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

### ***Specification***

Applicant is reminded of the proper language and format for an abstract of the disclosure.

The abstract should be in narrative form and generally limited to a single paragraph on a separate sheet within the range of 50 to 150 words. It is important that the abstract not exceed 150 words in length since the space provided for the abstract on the computer tape used by the printer is limited. The form and legal phraseology often used in patent claims, such as "means" and "said," should be avoided. The abstract should describe the disclosure sufficiently to assist readers in deciding whether there is a need for consulting the full patent text for details.

The language should be clear and concise and should not repeat information given in the title. It should avoid using phrases which can be implied, such as, "The disclosure concerns," "The disclosure defined by this invention," "The disclosure describes," etc.

The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities:

Page 5 recites "a coupling 19" and "a cylinder 19"; however, both statements cannot be true.

Appropriate correction is required.

### ***Claim Objections***

Claims 14 and 16 are objected to because of the following informalities:

Claim 14, line 6, change from "hole, coupler" to "hole, said coupler".

Claim 16, line 3, change from "flanges" to "flanges."

Appropriate correction is required.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 1, 6-9 and 14-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 1 recites the limitations "the portions of the housing" in line 12, and "the portions of the sectors" in line 16; and claims 17 and 18 recites the limitation "coupler and conduits combination" in line 1. There is insufficient antecedent basis for these limitations in the claims.

Claim 1 recites, "to engage the second conduit, with a portions of the sectors"; however, it is not clear to the examiner what this means.

Claim 6 recites, "two sectors of the nut forming having portions"; however, it is not clear to the examiner what this means.

Claim 14 recites, "A combination, comprising"; however, it is not clear to the examiner what the combination might be.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 10, 11, 14, 16 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US patent 4226164, Carter.

In regards to claim 10, Carter discloses a coupler in the form of a nut (22), the nut having two end faces and an annular hole extending between the two end faces along an axis, the coupler comprising the nut having two separable sectors (24, 26) joined along mating surfaces, the mating surfaces comprising a portion defined by a set of lines parallel to the axis of the annular hole and a portion perpendicular to the axis; and wherein the portion of the mating surfaces defined by lines parallel to the axis prevents relative movement of the sectors in a plurality of radial directions and the portion of the mating surfaces that is perpendicular to the axis prevent relative movement of the sectors in a plurality of axial directions when the sectors are assembled together.

In regards to claim 11, Carter discloses a coupler comprising two sectors forming respective first and second sectors (24, 26) of a nut (22) and defining an annular hole for surrounding ends of the two conduits, wherein each of the two sectors has means for preventing movement (52, 56) of the first sector relative to the second sector in a

Art Unit: 3679

first axial direction and means for preventing movement of the first sector relative to the second sector in a second axial direction.

In regards to claim 14, Carter discloses a combination, comprising a first conduit (14) having an outwardly extending flange (18) on an end of the first conduit, a second conduit (12) having bosses or threads (16) extending radially outward on an end of the second conduit, a coupler (22) forming an annular hole, coupler having portions (24, 26) defining the annular hole, the portions having an inwardly extending flange that receives and holds the outwardly extending flange on the end of the first conduit and lugs or threads that couple to the bosses or threads on the end of the second conduit for a coupled configuration; and wherein the coupler comprises two sectors connected in fixed relation by relative radial movement in a snap lock action.

In regards to claim 16, Carter discloses the two sectors snapping locking together with the portions defining the annular hole surrounding the first conduit and retained thereon by interference of the flanges.

In regards to claim 17, Carter discloses ribs and grooves (52, 56) on the two sectors, wherein ribs seat in grooves in the fixed relation and limit radial movement in a plurality of directions, and wherein the first conduit stops relative radial movement of the two sectors in all remaining directions.

Art Unit: 3679

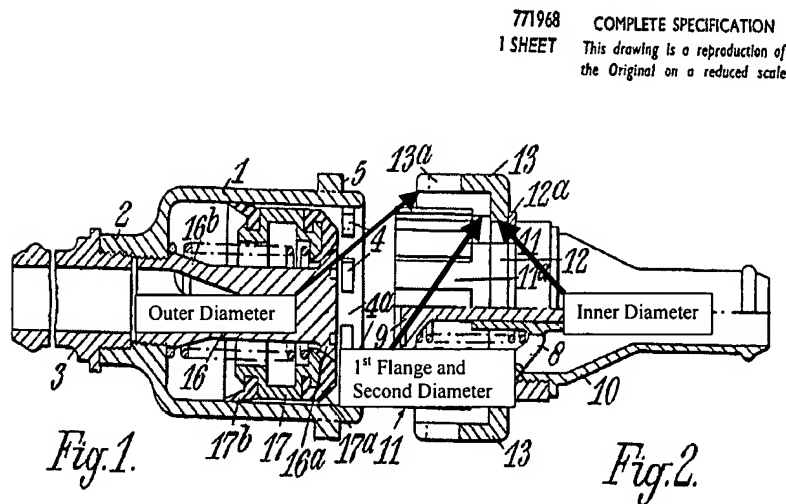
**Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103**

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1 and 6-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over patent GB 771968, Steer-Webster in view of Carter.

In regards to claim 1, in figures 1 and 2 below,



Steer-Webster discloses a coupler for joining a first conduit (10, 11) having a first diameter (12) and a second conduit (1), the first conduit having an axis and a first outwardly extending flange having a second diameter axially spaced from a second outwardly extending flange (12a) having a third diameter, the coupler comprising a housing (13) including an annular hole having an outer diameter and an inner diameter; the outer diameter of the annular hole



Art Unit: 3679

being greater than the second diameter of the first outwardly extending flange; the inner diameter of the annular hole being greater than the first diameter of the first conduit, to permit axial movement of the coupler over the first conduit; the inner diameter of the annular hole being less than the second diameter of the first outwardly extending flange and less than the third diameter of the second outwardly extending flange to prohibit movement of the portions of the housing defining the annular hole axially along the first conduit over either of the first outwardly extending flange and the second outwardly extending flange; whereby the coupler is moveable over the first outwardly extending flange to engage the second conduit, with a portions of the sectors defining the annular hole disposed between the first outwardly extending flange and the second outwardly extending flange. Steer-Webster does not disclose the housing and the annular hole being formed with at least two sectors radially compressible into a snap fit relationship with the portions of the sectors defining the annular hole disposed between the first outwardly extending flange and the second outwardly extending flange. Carter teaches the housing (22) and the annular hole being formed with at least two sectors (24, 26) radially compressible into a snap fit relationship with the portions of the sectors defining the annular hole to provide a split coupling nut which may be readily releaseably interlockingly engaged with each other (col. 1, lines 53-57). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to fabricate the housing and the annular hole with at least two sectors radially compressible into a snap fit relationship with the portions of the sectors defining the annular hole to provide a split

} applicant  
concedes

coupling nut which may be readily releaseably interlockingly engaged with each other,  
as taught by Carter.

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In regards to claim 6, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses a coupler in the form of a nut having an annular hole extending between end faces and centered on an axis, the coupler being adapted for coupling two conduits together by a bayonet twist and lock action, comprising two sectors of the nut forming having portions defining the annular hole and for surrounding ends of the two conduits by respective axial ends adjacent end faces of the nut; the sectors being sufficiently resilient to snap lock together; wherein the sectors snap lock together by relative radially inward movement.

In regards to claim 7, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses at least one axially elongate rib forming a radially outwardly facing groove and a another axially elongate rib forming a radially inwardly facing groove on each of the two sectors, wherein the ribs resiliently slide over each other into a seated position during a snap locking action of the two sectors.

In regards to claim 8, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses the sectors may be resiliently pried and separated with a sharp blade of a common tool after the snap locking action.

In regards to claim 9, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses the ribs prevent relative movement of the two sectors in a plurality of radial directions.

In regards to claim 10, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses a coupler in the form of a nut, the nut having two end faces and an annular hole extending between the two end faces along an axis, the coupler comprising the nut having two separable

sectors joined along mating surfaces, the mating surfaces comprising a portion defined by a set of lines parallel to the axis of the annular hole and a portion perpendicular to the axis; and wherein the portion of the mating surfaces defined by lines parallel to the axis prevents relative movement of the sectors in a plurality of radial directions and the portion of the mating surfaces that is perpendicular to the axis prevent relative movement of the sectors in a plurality of axial directions when the sectors are assembled together.

In regards to claim 11, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses a coupler comprising two sectors forming respective first and second sectors of a nut and defining an annular hole for surrounding ends of the two conduits, wherein each of the two sectors has means for preventing movement of the first sector relative to the second sector in a first axial direction and means for preventing movement of the first sector relative to the second sector in a second axial direction.

In regards to claim 12, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses a coupler (22) for coupling two conduits (12, 14) together by a bayonet twist and lock action comprising a nut having an annular hole extending axially between two end faces, the nut having portions (24, 26) defining the annular hole, the portions comprising an inwardly extending flange for rotational retention on a first of the two conduits, the portions having lugs (32, 34) protruding radially inwardly thereon for sliding past bosses of a second of the two conduits in bayonet twist action; wherein the coupler comprises a locking flange protruding axially from an end face of the coupler, the locking flange

having a socket adapted to engage a protrusion on the second of the two conduits for bayonet lock action.

In regards to claim 13, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses a pipe combination, comprising a first pipe having a first end with a first bayonet tube disposed at the first end; a second pipe having a second end with an annular space defined between a first annular flange and a second annular flange, the first annular flange having a diameter greater than the diameter of the annular space; a pipe coupler having a wall with an axial bore extending between opposing first and second faces, the axial bore having a diameter; first portions of the coupler extending into the bore at the first face, the first portions having a diameter greater than the diameter of the annular space and less than the diameter of the first flange; second portions of the coupler extending into the bore and forming a second bayonet tube; the coupler being adapted for disposition at an operative site with the first portions of the coupler disposed in the space of the first pipe; the coupler being rotatable at the operative site to engage the first bayonet tube with the second bayonet tube and to draw the second end of the second pipe into fluid communication with the first end of the first pipe; and the coupler being formed in at least two separate parts adapted to be radially snap fit to form the coupler at the operative site.

In regards to claim 14, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses a combination, comprising a first conduit having an outwardly extending flange on an end of the first conduit, a second conduit having bosses or threads extending radially outward on an end of the second conduit, a coupler forming an annular hole, coupler having portions

defining the annular hole, the portions having an inwardly extending flange that receives

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and holds the outwardly extending flange on the end of the first conduit and lugs or threads that couple to the bosses or threads on the end of the second conduit for a coupled configuration; and wherein the coupler comprises two sectors connected in fixed relation by relative radial movement in a snap lock action.

In regards to claim 15, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses the first conduit having a second outwardly protruding flange that prevents axial movement of the coupler along the first conduit.

In regards to claim 16, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses the two sectors snapping locking together with the portions defining the annular hole surrounding the first conduit and retained thereon by interference of the flanges.

In regards to claim 17, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses ribs and grooves on the two sectors, wherein ribs seat in grooves in the fixed relation and limit radial movement in a plurality of directions, and wherein the first conduit stops relative radial movement of the two sectors in all remaining directions.

In regards to claim 18, Steer-Webster in view of Carter discloses the first conduit having a nipple (11a) on the end; and the nipple is surrounded by the coupler.

In regards to claims 19 and 20, Steer-Webster discloses the claimed invention except for a method of using a coupler in the form of a nut having a first sector and a second sector defining an annular hole extending between end faces of the nut. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide a method of using a coupler in the form of a nut having a first sector

and a second sector defining an annular hole extending between end faces of the nut,

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since, under the principles of inherency, if a prior art device, in its normal and usual operation, would necessarily perform the method claimed, then the method claimed will be considered to be anticipated by the prior art device. When the prior art device is the same as a device described in the specification, it can be assumed the device will inherently perform the same process. *In re King*, 802 F.2d 1324, 231 USPQ 136 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

Claims 1-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over patent GB 771968, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson.

In regards to claim 1, in figures 1 and 2 above, Steer-Webster discloses a coupler for joining a first conduit (10, 11) having a first diameter (12) and a second conduit (1), the first conduit having an axis and a first outwardly extending flange having a second diameter axially spaced from a second outwardly extending flange (12a) having a third diameter, the coupler comprising a housing (13) including an annular hole having an outer diameter and an inner diameter; the outer diameter of the annular hole being greater than the second diameter of the first outwardly extending flange; the inner diameter of the annular hole being greater than the first diameter of the first conduit, to permit axial movement of the coupler over the first conduit; the inner diameter of the annular hole being less than the second diameter of the first outwardly extending flange and less than the third diameter of the second outwardly extending flange to prohibit movement of the portions of the housing defining the annular hole axially along the first

conduit over either of the first outwardly extending flange and the second outwardly extending flange; whereby the coupler is moveable over the first outwardly extending flange to engage the second conduit, with a portions of the sectors defining the annular hole disposed between the first outwardly extending flange and the second outwardly extending flange. Steer-Webster does not disclose the housing and the annular hole being formed with at least two sectors radially compressible into a snap fit relationship with the portions of the sectors defining the annular hole disposed between the first outwardly extending flange and the second outwardly extending flange. Sampson teaches the housing (49) and the annular hole being formed with at least two sectors radially compressible into a snap fit relationship with the portions of the sectors defining the annular hole to provide a system which is virtually foolproof in achieving a locked, coupled state, and which is very difficult for operators to misuse (col. 2, lines 36-39). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to fabricate the housing and the annular hole with at least two sectors radially compressible into a snap fit relationship with the portions of the sectors defining the annular hole to provide a system which is virtually foolproof in achieving a locked, coupled state, and which is very difficult for operators to misuse, as taught by Sampson.

In regards to claim 2, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses a coupler in the form of a housing having opposite end faces, the coupler for joining two conduits together, wherein the coupler comprises an annular hole extending along an axis between the opposite end faces of the housing, the annular hole comprising a first inner diameter, lugs (5) having a second inner diameter, and a flange having a third inner

diameter, wherein the first diameter is greater than the second diameter, and the second diameter is greater than the third diameter; the housing comprising a plurality of sectors that snap together; and the plurality of sectors being identical to each other in shape and size.

In regards to claim 3, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses the sectors are sufficiently resilient to enable snap lock action in a relative radially inward direction between the plurality of sectors.

In regards to claim 4, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses at least one stopping flange being located at an end face of each of the sectors and engages an end face of another of the sectors and prevents relative axial movement between the sectors in first and second axial directions.

In regards to claim 5, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses each sector having an additional the stopping flange preventing relative movement between the sectors.

In regards to claim 6, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses a coupler in the form of a nut having an annular hole extending between end faces and centered on an axis, the coupler being adapted for coupling two conduits together by a bayonet twist and lock action, comprising two sectors of the nut forming having portions defining the annular hole and for surrounding ends of the two conduits by respective axial ends adjacent end faces of the nut; the sectors being sufficiently resilient to snap lock together; wherein the sectors snap lock together by relative radially inward movement.



In regards to claim 7, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses at least one axially elongate rib forming a radially outwardly facing groove and a another axially elongate rib forming a radially inwardly facing groove on each of the two sectors, wherein the ribs resiliently slide over each other into a seated position during a snap locking action of the two sectors.

In regards to claim 8, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses the sectors may be resiliently pried and separated with a sharp blade of a common tool after the snap locking action.

In regards to claim 9, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses the ribs prevent relative movement of the two sectors in a plurality of radial directions.

In regards to claim 10, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses a coupler in the form of a nut, the nut having two end faces and an annular hole extending between the two end faces along an axis, the coupler comprising the nut having two separable sectors joined along mating surfaces, the mating surfaces comprising a portion defined by a set of lines parallel to the axis of the annular hole and a portion perpendicular to the axis; and wherein the portion of the mating surfaces defined by lines parallel to the axis prevents relative movement of the sectors in a plurality of radial directions and the portion of the mating surfaces that is perpendicular to the axis prevent relative movement of the sectors in a plurality of axial directions when the sectors are assembled together.

In regards to claim 11, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses a coupler comprising two sectors forming respective first and second sectors of a nut and defining

an annular hole for surrounding ends of the two conduits, wherein each of the two

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sectors has means for preventing movement of the first sector relative to the second sector in a first axial direction and means for preventing movement of the first sector relative to the second sector in a second axial direction.

In regards to claim 12, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses a coupler for coupling two conduits together by a bayonet twist and lock action comprising a nut having an annular hole extending axially between two end faces, the nut having portions defining the annular hole, the portions comprising an inwardly extending flange for rotational retention on a first of the two conduits, the portions having lugs protruding radially inwardly thereon for sliding past bosses of a second of the two conduits in bayonet twist action; wherein the coupler comprises a locking flange protruding axially from an end face of the coupler, the locking flange having a socket adapted to engage a protrusion on the second of the two conduits for bayonet lock action.

In regards to claim 13, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses a pipe combination, comprising a first pipe having a first end with a first bayonet tube disposed at the first end; a second pipe having a second end with an annular space defined between a first annular flange and a second annular flange, the first annular flange having a diameter greater than the diameter of the annular space; a pipe coupler having a wall with an axial bore extending between opposing first and second faces, the axial bore having a diameter; first portions of the coupler extending into the bore at the first face, the first portions having a diameter greater than the diameter of the annular space and less than the diameter of the first flange; second portions of the coupler extending

into the bore and forming a second bayonet tube; the coupler being adapted for

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disposition at an operative site with the first portions of the coupler disposed in the space of the first pipe; the coupler being rotatable at the operative site to engage the first bayonet tube with the second bayonet tube and to draw the second end of the second pipe into fluid communication with the first end of the first pipe; and the coupler being formed in at least two separate parts adapted to be radially snap fit to form the coupler at the operative site.

In regards to claim 14, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses a combination, comprising a first conduit having an outwardly extending flange on an end of the first conduit, a second conduit having bosses or threads extending radially outward on an end of the second conduit, a coupler forming an annular hole, coupler having portions defining the annular hole, the portions having an inwardly extending flange that receives and holds the outwardly extending flange on the end of the first conduit and lugs or threads that couple to the bosses or threads on the end of the second conduit for a coupled configuration; and wherein the coupler comprises two sectors connected in fixed relation by relative radial movement in a snap lock action.

In regards to claim 15, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses the first conduit having a second outwardly protruding flange that prevents axial movement of the coupler along the first conduit.

In regards to claim 16, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses the two sectors snapping locking together with the portions defining the annular hole surrounding the first conduit and retained thereon by interference of the flanges.

In regards to claim 17, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses ribs and grooves on the two sectors, wherein ribs seat in grooves in the fixed relation and limit radial movement in a plurality of directions, and wherein the first conduit stops relative radial movement of the two sectors in all remaining directions.

In regards to claim 18, Steer-Webster in view of Sampson discloses the first conduit having a nipple (11a) on the end; and the nipple is surrounded by the coupler.

In regards to claims 19 and 20, Steer-Webster discloses the claimed invention except for a method of using a coupler in the form of a nut having a first sector and a second sector defining an annular hole extending between end faces of the nut. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide a method of using a coupler in the form of a nut having a first sector and a second sector defining an annular hole extending between end faces of the nut, since, under the principles of inherency, if a prior art device, in its normal and usual operation, would necessarily perform the method claimed, then the method claimed will be considered to be anticipated by the prior art device. When the prior art device is the same as a device described in the specification, it can be assumed the device will inherently perform the same process. *In re King*, 802 F.2d 1324, 231 USPQ 136 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

### ***Conclusion***

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure because it illustrates the current state of the art.

Art Unit: 3679

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Aaron M Dunwoody whose telephone number is (703) 306-3436. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday between 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Lynne H Browne can be reached on (703) 308-1159. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 872-9302 for regular communications and (703) 872-9327 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-1113.

.amd  
February 4, 2003

  
**Lynne H. Browne**  
**Supervisory Patent Examiner**  
**Technology Center 3670**